

Charter Review Commission
Colchester, Connecticut
Town Hall Room 1
February 11, 2015
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Gregg LePage, Gary Siddell, Ursula Tschinkel
Members Absent: Monica Egan, Betty Wagner

Also Present: Board of Selectman liaison Bill Curran
Guests: Town of Colchester Chief Financial Officer: Maggie Cosgrove
Colchester Town Assessor: John Chaponis

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Cathy Curran
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1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Chairman LePage.

2. Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

3. Approval of the Minutes – January 14, 2015

Motion to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2015 meeting with one correction: Section C-101 should be recorded as C-1001. Motion to approve by G. Siddell, second by U. Tschinkel.
Unanimous approval, motion carried.

4. Citizen's Comments

There were no citizen's comments.

5. Discussion with Town CFO

The Charter was discussed with the CFO, Maggie Cosgrove, as it relates to the responsibilities of her office.

A. A brief discussion was held regarding Article XII, C-1201, of the Town Charter, Page 25. Per Ms. Cosgrove, Code & Administration has been absorbed into Engineering. Public Works has absorbed grounds maintenance, previously known as the "Parks" section of the "Parks & Rec" Department. Public Works is the overall mantle for many divisions, including fleet, grounds and facilities, etc. These operate under the Public Works Budget with one department head. At this time, the Charter and the Town Department listing noted on the website are not in sync. This will need to be refined in the Charter.

B. Ms. Cosgrove noted that department heads are responsible for their budget and the Charter should allow them the ability to transfer funds within their departments. The functional level as well as policy and oversight should be taken into consideration.

C. At the present time, the Board of Selectman has to approve all Town contracts. A recommendation is made to add language to the Charter that would allow the BOS the authority to delegate the signing of contracts to the First Selectman.

D. It is recommended that at the annual budget meeting, the line item comparison be removed from the Town Budget.

- E. The necessity of a Town Treasurer was mentioned. The position has a level of control over the budget and contracts. The potential exists for an untrained individual to be elected. Ms. Cosgrove is of the opinion that the functions of the Town Government would not be adversely affected by the elimination of the position.
- F. In summary, Ms. Cosgrove stated that the Charter should contain language to enable each department to become more efficient while maintaining a legal level of control over their respective budgets. The Board of Selectman should maintain policy oversight, while the Board of Finance should maintain financial oversight.

6. Discussion with Town Assessor

The Charter was discussed with the Town Assessor, John Chaponis, as it relates to the responsibilities of his office.

A. The Town Assessor is an appointed position. Of the three departments that work closely with the public, only the Assessor is appointed; the Tax Collector and the Town Clerk are elected.

B. All three positions are very specialized due to advances in technology and State requirements.

C. Mr. Chaponis feels strongly that the Tax Collector and Town Clerk positions should be appointed to best serve the public's interest. If appointed, the individuals answer to the administration and are accountable for their position and office. Prior experience in the position would be required. Ms. Cosgrove and Mr. Chaponis agreed that appointing these positions would be advantageous to the Town.

D. Mr. Chaponis and Ms. Cosgrove agreed that these positions should not contain a residency requirement as this severely limits a pool of candidates. It is felt that elected positions should contain a residency clause, while appointed should not.

E. Ms. Cosgrove stated that if the position were elected or appointed, the effect to the budget would be the same.

Discussion was held regarding the referendum. Per Ms. Cosgrove, the cost to the town for each referendum is approximately \$3,500.00. The Charter language regarding recount of the referendum is unclear.

The Committee thanked Ms. Cosgrove and Mr. Chaponis for their time and valuable feedback.

7. Review Timeline / Charge of Commission

The review is tabled to the next Commission meeting.

Chairman LePage discussed other Town Departments the Commission may wish to meet with.

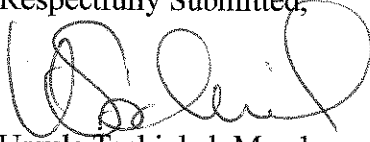
8. Citizen's Comments

BOS liaison Bill Curran shared correspondence he had received from Steve Schuster, in which Mr. Schuster stated that he strongly supports appointed boards and Youth and Social Services. The Commission thanked Mr. Schuster for his input.

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by G. Siddell, second by U. Tschinkel. Unanimous approval. Motion carried and meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'U. Tschinkel', written over a horizontal line.

Ursula Tschinkel, Member